



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

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EXCISE

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May 22 1962

CONFIDENTIAL / NODIS

TO: The Secretary

THROUGH: P - Mr. Newsom
S/MS - Dr. Shulman

FROM: EUR - George S. Vest

SUBJECT: Soviet Combat Forces and the '62 Under-standings on Cuba

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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[] President Kennedy announced publicly the withdrawal of the bombers and lifting of the US quarantine. Kennedy went on to cite the need for continued vigilance in light of "our identification in recent days of a number of Soviet ground combat units in Cuba, although we are informed that these and other units were associated with the protection of offensive weapons systems and will also be withdrawn in due course." This appears to be our first public mention of these forces.

Cuba remained a topic of major political concern in the succeeding months, amid press and Congressional speculation that the Soviet build-up in Cuba was in fact continuing in an effort to establish it as a base for the export of communism in this hemisphere. In press conferences on January 24 and February 7, President Kennedy responded to such speculation. He noted that 4,500 Soviet technical personnel associated with the missiles had been withdrawn, acknowledged that up to 17,000 Soviet military personnel, including four combat groups remained, expressed U.S. concern over the situation, but stressed that these troops did not pose an immediate threat. He recalled Khrushchev's statement that they would be withdrawn in due course, noting that we were working with the Soviets to determine what this meant.